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ABSTRACT

This study explores the feasibility of utilizing school-focused staff development programs in promoting international cooperation through transferability and/or adaptation of relevant aspects of this type of inservice education by foreign countries. The objective of this presentation is to develop interest in ways in which teachers in various countries can be involved in: (1) defining their needs; (2) delimiting those needs; (3) planning inservice programs; (4) taking part in activities related to stated needs; (5) evaluation of staff development activities; and (6) exchange and dissemination of information on school-focused inservice education. Included in this document is an examination of Palm Beach County, Florida, where a model of school-focused inservice was observed. Rationale for emphasizing school-based staff development is based upon the following assumptions: (1) Teachers acquire real professional orientation only while on the job, in the classroom, with live children; (2) Problems encountered in teaching tend to vary from school to school, and each school has its own mores and exceptions; (3) Teachers in such a program get feedback on new ideas as they implement them and are able to make accommodations almost immediately, if needed; (4) A school-based program serves to facilitate communication among teachers within a school; (5) School-based inservice encourages a search for problems in the curriculum and provides opportunity for joint solutions; and (6) Reinforcement of good teaching practices is encouraged by school-based staff development. Representative educators from foreign countries joined in the observation of the Palm Beach model. (JD)

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Investigation of School-Based Staff Development Programs As a Means to Promote International Cooperation in Curriculum Improvement Through Teacher Training

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Investigation of School-Based Staff Development Programs as A Means to Promote International Cooperation in Curriculum Improvement Through Teacher Training

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The theme of this presentation is to explore the feasibility of utilizing school-focussed staff development programs in promoting international cooperation through transferability and/or adaptation of relevant aspects of this type of in-service education by foreign countries. For purposes of illustration and discussion, the presentation will relate to a study of school-focussed inservice education in Palm Beach County, Florida.

a. More specifically, the objective of the presentation is to develop interest in procedures for increasing foreign program exchange by studying ways in which teachers in various countries can be involved in: 1) defining their needs; 2) delimiting those needs; 3) planning inservice programs; 4) taking part in activities related to stated needs; 5) evaluation of staff development activities; 6) exchange and dissemination of information on school-focussed inservice education.

   Regarding this objective, there has been a continuing study of school-focussed inservice education of teachers (INSET), sponsored by the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI) of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and the National Institute of Education (NIE). Included in this study was an on-site visit to Palm Beach County, where the model was observed in detail, along with explication of other school-focussed inservice models from elsewhere in the United States.

b. The dynamic events, which are shaping the future to be faced by the world population in the decades to come, are mirrored by changes in the function and form of social institutions in various countries. Particularly in schools, we see the impact of an organic revolution in which form follows function. To wit, as societies respond in the broad sense to the pressures from the grass roots level, (for instance, a demand to participate in decision-making process), there is a search for social mechanisms that allow concerned parties a means for articulating their needs, wants and aspirations. These mechanisms should provide processes for collaborative interaction in planning to meet needs, and implementing programs addressed to these needs. In school systems of many democratic societies, it appears that a movement to school-based and/or focussed management is one way of providing such a mechanism. Such a premise can be thought of as analogous to a biological function--that is to say, just as the cell is the functional unit of a biological organism, the school may be regarded as the functional unit of the school system. This means that forces which are causing evolution in society can find a focal point in the tens of thousands school centers around the world.

   This type of social evolution seems to be a major factor in the movement

towards school-based management in curriculum development. A concomitant move has developed for programming the inservice education necessary to equip teachers with competencies, skills, and attitudes required to meet their changing task at the local level. Resultant moves in several countries have been to school-based and/or school-focussed education of instructional staff. As recently as June 24, 1977, the London Times has stated in its educational supplement, "There is an overriding shift of emphasis towards the school in the acceptance by the school that the staff, perhaps all the staff...have a training role." Some further professional rationale for the shift in emphasis to school-focussed staff development may be stated in the following assumptions:

1. Most pre-service education can only approximate professional preparation. Teachers acquire real professional orientation only while on the job, in classrooms, with live children. That is to say, in pre-school, one learns about teaching, and in inservice, one learns how to teach.

2. Problems encountered in teaching tend to vary from school to school within a district, particularly in large, diverse districts. Each school has its own social milieu - different mores and expectations. This gives rise to teachers within a school center having similar professional problems.

3. Teachers actually have a chance, in school-based programs, to test and refine possible innovative practices. Teachers, therefore, get feedback on new ideas as they implement them, and are able to make accomodations almost immediately, if needed.

4. A school-based or school-focussed program serves to facilitate communication among teachers within a school. Thus, an opportunity is provided for solving differences presented by differing values and various interests of the staff members in any given school center.

5. School-based or school-focussed inservice encourages a search for problems in the curriculum. Any individual can bring a problem area to the attention of the faculty; the faculty can then work jointly to find the solution to the problem.

6. Reenforcement of good teaching practices is encouraged by school-based staff development. That is to say, teachers in this type of program do not tend to feel isolated. It is possible to develop a group momentum, and a resulting esprit de corps then ensues.

The total rationale, then, spells out a need to explore various means to accomodate school-based training of inservice teachers, and thus provide the framework for study of the Palm Beach County model, as well as other school-focussed INSET models, and also for subsequent recommendations for further follow-up activities.

c. & d. School-focussed inservice education was initiated in Palm Beach County during 1973-74 by the Department of Professional Staff Development. Responses from teachers and principals in the county, after four years of participation, form the data base for the results and conclusions stated in the presentation. The model implemented in 1973-74 was based upon the premise that it is desirable for teachers to be involved in the identification of their own needs. This concept, along with allocations of money to school centers, gave the opportunity for inservice activities to take place in the work setting. In essence, each school then became a self-renewal center, thus providing a major step to the goal of educational program improvement--hence, curriculum improvement through staff development. A study was conducted by an anonymous questionnaire, disseminated on a random basis to enough teachers in the Palm Beach County School System to ensure a statistically significant survey at the .05 level, and by on-site visitations to randomly selected schools.

The questionnaire was designed to gain perception from the local educators as to the types of inservice activities in which they had participated. The management of the program, the actual content of the presentations, are the resulting benefits from inservice education activities.

e. Teacher Survey Findings: Since the inauguration of school-based inservice education in Palm Beach County, 99% of the district's 3,500 teachers indicated they had taken part, at some time, in staff development activities; 84% of those teachers felt their involvement in planning was adequate; 89% felt the goals of the school-based program were good; 88% felt that consultant presentations, when used, were well done; 84% felt other participants had satisfactory attitudes towards the program; 85% felt they had had a successful learning experience. All teachers report they had changed their behavior to some degree, with 35% saying they had changed a great deal or more; 93% of the teachers felt their students had benefited as a result of their participation in activities.

Principal Survey Findings: 100% of the district's principals had taken part in some type of inservice activity.; 94% felt administrative planning was adequate or better; 95% felt consultant presentations were adequate or better; 96% felt participant attitudes were good; 98% expressed contentment with the learning experience. All principals felt they had changed as a result of staff development. Further, 94% of the principals felt their teachers had benefited from inservice activities.

There was also space on the questionnaire for participants to make open-ended comments on the impact of the school-based program. Generally noted were such things as: improved interest in students; improvement in community involvement processes and techniques; changes in teacher behavior, such as learning to listen more closely to students and peers; utilization of various human relations techniques in content oriented programs.

Conclusions of Study: Viewing participation as a measurement of involvement by teachers since the initiation of school-based staff development, we find the comparative cumulative (4 year period) is 459,476 hours spent in inservice activities, on an annual average of 114,869. This represents an increase in the annual average of hours spent (over the previous four years when a centralized staff development was used) of about 104%.

The impact of doubled participation raises a question of what really happens in the classroom as a result of staff development. This is a very difficult question to answer in a completely reliable manner, due, in part, to the many variables affecting both student and teacher performance. However, follow-up after school-focussed INSET activities were conducted reveals that in some schools, teachers became involved in such areas as examining their own instructional materials for sexual stereotyping. Further, in another school, teachers became involved in conducting human relations activities within their classrooms. In the content area, as an example, one elementary school sought to improve the teaching of reading through staff development, with the result of 16% more students scoring above their level of ability than in a prior year. In a school in which a human development program was inaugurated to provide a more humanistic school climate, by helping students develop self-discipline and improve self-concept, a decrease of about 36% in discipline referrals was noted. In a student/parent survey, results indicated that both felt an improvement in the school's climate. As a result of a series of workshops in a high school with over 90 staff members, all but one could diagnose the reading level of a student, using one of two different methods.

Over the past four years, almost all teachers and principals have taken part in staff development, with an average of more than 20 hours per professional staff member per year. Their thoughts can be compared in many areas--for example, governance and management. Both teachers and principals seem to feel teachers were adequately involved in planning. Both groups seemed fairly content with their role in the planning process, perhaps due to the fact that local school goals are determined and used in staff development. A majority of both groups seemed satisfied that goals were relevant to needs.

Content and Delivery: After planning, staff development programs are implemented. Both principal and teacher groups indicated almost the same degree of satisfaction in content and presentation of programs. Generally, both groups had similar feelings about the attitudes of other participants, and that was that they were favorable. Concerning the delivery of program and the utilization of resources, both groups were also positive. In general, principals exhibited a slightly more positive attitude towards the staff development program than teachers, although the opinion of teachers almost mirrored that of principals.

Reflections on the past four years of school-based inservice education

in Palm Beach County have given rise to several assumptions, namely: 1) There is always room for improvement in any process. 2) There is a need to conduct process evaluation on a regular basis. 3) Evaluation of the ultimate impact of staff development is difficult to achieve with a high degree of certainty, so secondary indicators of success or failure frequently must be used. 4) Principals should provide more positive reinforcement for teachers when change is noticed. 5) It must be realized that beginning teachers and principals have different staff development needs than seasoned educators. 6) Most teachers respond well to training activities conducted within their schools. 7) It may be easier to alter curriculum in a school by changing the behavior of a group of teachers and the principal, than to change one teacher at a time. 8) It is possible for a school to develop a program that allows for professional growth of teachers, and improve its instructional program as a result. In fact, this seems to happen concurrently. 9) It appears that different schools respond in varying ways to opportunities. A key factor in this response appears to be the principal. 10) Continuing staff development support is needed if change in the educational program--hence, improvement in instruction--is to be continued.

f. The Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI), of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), has been particularly interested in furthering the improvement of inservice education of teachers (INSET) as a viable, effective and efficient process representing a factor in the improvement in the quality of the delivery of educational services. Impetus for this concern came during an OECD Intergovernmental Conference on Teacher Policy, held in Paris. One statement evolving from this conference was the concept that "priority should be given to the recurrent education for teachers in planning and financing of educational systems."

The experience of the last two decades has demonstrated that many new and worthwhile innovative educational programs were not fully or successfully implemented. This has been due, in part, to the problem of integrating these processes, in a comprehensive way, into a school's total educational program. Said another way, many of the promising educational innovations of the last twenty years have either not been implemented successfully, or with only limited success, because those individuals who implement at the "grass roots level" (the teachers) have not been involved in participatory planning. There is, then, the need for the programming of inservice experience at the school center level, so that this kind of planning may be encouraged.

Many OECD member countries have been involved in, or are continuing detailed study of the necessary changes in INSET, including nature, scale, costs, organization and structure. Further support of this effort has come from the National Institute of Education (NIE - United States). Activities sponsored by CERI, beginning in 1975, have provided

for a study focussing on innovations in INSET. These activities included: 1) preparation and publication of a series of national case studies from several member countries; 2) an international seminar held during the summer of 1976 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, U.S.A., to debate these experiences; and 3) a report on findings from the case studies and the Philadelphia seminar, a conference on Strategies for School-Focussed Structures for Teachers in Change and Innovation held in Stockholm during 1976, an on-site workshop/conference on School-Focussed Inservice Education in Palm Beach County, Florida in the fall of 1977, and a conference on School-Focussed Inservice Education of Teachers in Bournemouth, England during the spring of 1978.

g. The Palm Beach County, Florida school system was selected to host an International Workshop/Conference on School-Focussed Inservice Education of Teachers (INSET) during early November of 1977. This session was jointly sponsored by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) educational arm, the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI), and the National Institute of Education (NIE). Attendance at the conference was by invitation to approximately thirty teacher educators from member countries. During the meeting, the group studied four representative types of school-focussed inservice education. This included a presentation of the Palm Beach County Model, as well as presentations from the Mesa, Arizona system, the Atlanta, Georgia Teacher Corps Consortium, and the Western Kentucky Project. Additionally, there were on-site visits to Palm Beach County schools. This provided a major source of input on school-focussed activities from those directly affected - that is to say, the teachers at the school center level.

   The Palm Beach workshop/conference provided a forum for: 1) allowing participants from member countries to have exposure to several examples of school-focussed INSET activities, and further, to have this exposure by various means, including on-site visits; 2) learning in detail how school-focussed INSET works, and to become familiar with both strengths and weaknesses of this process; and 3) discussing and exchanging views about the feasibility of transfering and/or adapting aspects of school-focussed INSET in the social context of various member countries' school systems.

A recurrent note that constantly emerged during these activities and those which preceded them, was the need for continuing efforts to facilitate further evaluation, research, development and dissemination of promising INSET practices and products, particularly those of a school-based or school-focussed nature. Specifically, and in the opinion of the author, these efforts could be encompassed by two broad areas: A. Needed Developments; and B. Needed Research. (Many of these areas were initially suggested in a paper prepared for the Philadelphia conference.)

A. Needed Developments. Efforts are needed to develop:

1. (a) An international clearinghouse and resource data bank to reflect the current "state of the art" concerning techniques, processes and products relevant to INSET programs in member countries.

   (b) A listing of key practitioners and theorists involved with INSET in member countries.

2. Prototype inservice centers which demonstrate exemplary school-based or school-focussed INSET programs. These centers should:

   (a) Depict content and process of relevance and substance.

   (b) Exemplify the collaborative basis necessary for this type INSET (i.e., the role of various parties and levels in the governance and operation of INSET.

3. A type of consultant services facilitated through OECD/CERI which would make expert help, in given areas, available on a short or long term basis, for member countries wishing to implement various school-based/focussed INSET programs.

4. A type of international internship for administrators and trainers of teachers, which will prepare these individuals to return to their respective member countries, trained in:

   (a) the role of various parties in the collaborative planning process;

   (b) needed skills, particularly in organizational development and human interaction facilitation, necessary to implement school-based or focussed INSET.

B. Needed Research. Efforts should be facilitated towards the following:

1. the validation of teaching effectiveness. Sets of teaching variables should be examined in the context of specific curricular designs and instructional ideologies which constitute the basic variants in approaches to schooling in member countries. There should be a concomitant study on the relationship of teaching effectiveness to school-based or focussed INSET;

2. those teacher traits, habits, attitudes and value orientations that may be valid predictors of teacher effectiveness in different school contexts;

3. the possible stages of personal and professional development of the experienced teacher, in order to root inservice content and methodology in a conceptual framework which is based on understanding of adults and teachers as learners;

4. the skills necessary for personnel to function in the role as school center facilitator of INSET, whether the facilitator be principal, headmaster, team leader, or other;

5. transfer, endurance, and stability of training over extended time, and the implications of this for recurrent types of continuing teacher education.

By following up on the development and research needs, a mechanism could be developed for the utilization of CERI and NIE to promote a constructive, supportive role for research, evaluation, and feedback to strengthen INSET activities in member countries. In fact, the further study and international collaboration on school-focussed INSET, as a process-centered activity by CERI/NIE, could be the fulcrum upon which a lever is being used to move teacher education to higher levels of expectation and effectiveness. Archimedes is purported to have said, "Give me a lever long enough and I will move the world." This lever is being forged today in the classrooms of the world. It is the collection of insights by which both the art and science of effective teaching are being used, studied, and replicated in truly relevant school settings, so that the clientele of the world's schools can be the immediate and long range beneficiaries of improved educational programs.